

YOUR WEEK IN CHINA'S CAPITAL

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BEIJING TODAY

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Putting Down Roots in Beijing

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Google Comeback?

Google is rumored to return to China's mainland, five years after a fallout with the Chinese government.

The tech giant might reenter the Chinese market with a version of its Google Play store for Android devices. **Page 2**

Beijing Teachers Required to Take Qualification Tests

BY DIAO DIAO

The Beijing Municipal Ministry of Education declared the capital a trial city for new reforms to teaching certifications on Aug. 31. As part of the new program, teachers will be required to pass an exam to get a teaching certificate. Previously, certificates were automatically granted to all graduating education majors.

Test candidates must have a Beijing hukou or labor agreement with a local school, as well as a relevant diploma. Certif-

icates will be valid for three years. Teachers at the elementary or middle school level will not be required to retake the exam.

Exam topics include overall ability, education knowledge and ability, subject knowledge and teaching aptitude.

Teachers who refused to be named told the *Beijing Youth Daily* that increased qualification and skills are important for being a teacher because it's getting difficult to have proper control of a class and

lessons. The new regulations raise the bar for professional knowledge and emphasize comprehensive skills. ■



CHINESE STOCK INDEXES

SSE (Shanghai)

| Close | Change | YTD |
|----------|----------------|--------|
| 3,197.89 | ▼45.20 (1.39%) | -0.39% |

SZSE (Shenzhen)

| Close | Change | YTD |
|----------|----------------|--------|
| 1,770.38 | ▼28.47 (1.58%) | +25.7% |

HSI (Hong Kong)

| Close | Change | YTD |
|-----------|----------------|--------|
| 21,577.40 | ▼553.91 (2.5%) | -5.99% |

Accurate to market close on December 31, 2014





Photo by Reuters

Google has been grabbing tech headlines with rumblings about a plan to return to the Chinese mainland in the near future.

Tech blog The Information quoted sources “familiar” with Google’s plans and said Google hopes to deploy a version of its Play store on Chinese Android devices sometime this fall, a first step to reestablish its presence in the country.

Google is in talks with Chinese government officials and handset makers about launching a new Android app store, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on Sept. 4.

Google’s split from China came in 2010, when Google alleged the Chinese government launched cyber attacks against its Gmail service. A disagreement over how to censor search results drove a wedge even deeper into the relationship.

Google moved its service team from China to Hong Kong shortly after.

The retreat was widely criticized as a commercial mistake that gave Apple free reign to dominate the Chinese market. The retreat also cost Google significant advertising revenue.

Android operation system sits at the forefront of the battlefield it is destined to take back.

Google Plots China Comeback After 5 Years

BY YANG XIN

producing Nexus, Huawei is the only one that has close ties to high-ranking officials.

Google is known to be resistant to any censoring of its services. The company has not made any public statement about its China plans.

A research paper by Analysys said that Baidu, Tencent and Qihoo 360 controlled 80 percent of the market in Chinese Android app stores in the second quarter of 2015. It remains a question whether Google Play can survive in such a highly saturated market. ■

Although the Google-backed Android powers the majority of the world’s smartphones, the majority of these handsets do not carry the Google Play store or related Google services, the *Journal* said.

In its place, Chinese phone makers have created countless alternatives. Popular Chinese App stores by Xiaomi, Baidu, Tencent and Alibaba share no revenue with Google. Re-entering the Chinese market and releasing Google Play on licensed smartphones is the company’s best chance to recover the market.

Insiders expect Huawei to be Google’s guide in its return to China. Huawei is producing a 5.7-inch Google-branded Nexus device – the first official Google phone to feature the new “China-compatible” Play store.

Among its former partners in

Celebrities to Pay for Bad Endorsements

BY DIAO DIAO



Photo by CFP

China is cracking down on celebrity and child endorsements with a revision to the national Advertising Law approved on Sept. 1.

In the past, celebrities, experts and public figures often recommended or endorsed products and bore no legal responsibility when the goods turned out to be fakes.

The new law provides a legal framework to fine celebrities who endorse fake products and to prohibit them from additional endorsements for three years. Compensation for civil liability is also included in the new law.

The new law also requires that children younger than 10 years of age shall not endorse any product.

Zhang Guohua, director general of advertising of the State Administration of Industry and Commerce, said China’s civil code considers children younger than 10 years of age to be persons without the capacity for civil conduct. The law does not expect them to understand the principle of truth in advertising, he said.

The Statistic Center System of the State Administration of Industry and Commerce has been given charge to supervise all Chinese advertisements. It can mete out fines for illegal advertisements of up to 2 million yuan.

The new law also includes WeChat advertisements.

Although WeChat is owned by Tencent, the company is not legally responsible for monitoring advertisements posted by personal users.

“For now, we can only rely on reports from netizens. A detailed plan for dealing with these advertisements will be released soon,” Zhang said. ■

Tourists Confront New Round of Ticket Price Hikes

BY YANG XIN

Sightseeing in China is becoming even more expensive.

A report by the Tourism Research Center at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences released in May said that the average price of admission to the nation’s 5A-level scenic spots reached 112 yuan at the end of 2014.

Although the government has urged scenic spots to postpone their price hikes, tourists planning to travel during the upcoming Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day Golden Week had best pack extra cash.

Scenic spots such as the villages of Wuzhen in Zhejiang province, the Mai-

jishan Grottoes in Gansu province, Silver Cave in Guangxi province and Shanghai Wild Animal Park are preparing to hold public hearings about 10 to 60 percent increases in their ticket fees.

In 2007, the Chinese National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) issued an announcement limiting tourist destinations from raising their ticket prices more than once every three years.

Since 2015 marks the end of the most recent three-year “price restriction period,” a new round of price hikes are on the agenda for site operators.

While tourists may feel cheated by the ever-rising ticket prices, tourism admin-

istrators say the hikes merely reflect market forces.

“The cost of everything in the country is increasing, so it’s quite natural for us to raise the price of admission. A 10 percent increase in price should not be so hard for tourists to bear,” said a spokesperson for Oriental Pearl TV Tower in Shanghai in a telephone interview with China National Radio.

The famous TV tower said it would raise its ticket price by 10 percent in 2016.

Local governments lean heavily on scenic spots to pad their coffers, the *Wall Street Journal* reported in an editorial earlier, citing industry experts.

In an editorial on *Fujian Daily*, tourism

authorities were blamed for failing to compel local authorities to disclose how tourism revenue is spent.

“It is unfair that tourists should pay for any increases in operating costs that result from the inefficient and bureaucratic operations of an attraction’s management company,” the editorial said.

The China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) has been calling on scenic attractions to use a single price system.

4A and 5A scenic spots seem more obedient in this aspect. As of the end of August, 2,050, or four in five, National 4A and 5A Scenic Spots have pledged not to raise ticket prices. ■



Pharmaceutical Makers Bank on Benefits to Lure Indian Talent

Photo by AP

BY YANG XIN

China's pharmaceutical companies are searching for India's top talents in the fields of data collection and drug research, the India-based *Economic Times* reported on Sept. 1.

The *Economic Times* quoted Narayan Rao, executive vice president at Natco Pharma, as saying that Chinese pharmaceutical companies are offering tempting pay packages, as much as three times more than what the Indian firms are paying, to attract Indian scientists to China.

"Apart from hefty pay packages, Indian scientists are attracted to the robust urban and manufacturing infrastructure the Chinese entities offer, as well as the safe work environment," Rao said.

As many as 50-60 Indian pharmaceutical professionals were recruited for management positions by Chinese firms during the past two years, said a senior Indian commerce ministry official who did not wish to be named.

The industry's ambition is not hard to understand.

"China appears to have realized that there is not much value in active pharmaceutical ingredients and that it's time to move up the value chain," said Sujesh Vasudevan, president and head of Glenmark's India business.

Utkarsh Palnitkar, KPMG's life sciences head, said that as China moves up the value chain from manufacturing "simple to manufacture" to "more complex to manufacture," there will be a growing need to focus on research and development (R&D) activities, which will further push the demand for specialized job roles.

"Chinese firms have been investing substantially in R&D over the past few years. The money spent on pharmaceutical R&D crossed the \$3.25 billion mark in 2011 from a mere \$162 million a decade back," Palnitkar said.

"Chinese have proved a serious threat,

and India should wake up before it is too late," Vasudevan claimed.

Indian pharmaceuticals said they have been reducing dependence on the supply of bulk drugs and raw materials from China that go into drug making.

The two countries are almost equal in the number of US FDA-approved drug manufacturing facilities. While China leads in bulk drugs by a wide margin, India tops China in the production and export of generic drugs, especially to regulated markets.

In the amount of drug master files (DMFs) approved, India held double the amount gained in China, *The Economic Times* reported.

But many insiders are expressively more optimistic about the latest trend.

"We guess this trend will help Indian companies increase their presence in China and vice versa over a period of time," said PV Appaji, director general of India's Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council. ■

Mooncake Prices Go Over the Moon, Again

BY DIAO DIAO

Mooncakes are the traditional treat of the Mid-Autumn Festival, which falls on Sept. 27 this year. Although boxed sets are available at almost every supermarket, the treats have been steadily increasing in cost.

Most boxes cost 200 to 300 yuan, but mooncakes sold as part of a gift package can cost several thousand yuan.

The Hilton Hotel at Wangfujing sells a gift set for 899 yuan that includes a box of mooncakes worth 198 yuan, as well as other gifts such as chocolate, macaroons and a bottle of wine.

China World Summit Wing is promoting two gift sets this year. Its Jadeite and Diamond sets are sold for 1,588 yuan and 1,888 yuan. Customers can choose from the gift list to tailor their mooncake gift box.

More casual shoppers who are buying mooncakes for family and friends tend to prefer supermarkets or street side bakeries. But these too are rocketing in cost.

At the popular chain bakery Weidumei, a single mooncake costs 10 yuan while a six-mooncake box costs 108 yuan. The packaging accounts for almost 50 per-



Photo by CFP

cent of the price.

The chain store Holiland sells a box of mooncakes that cost 150 yuan more than buying single mooncakes. ■



Centipede Found in Man's Ear

A man surnamed Zhong in Guiyang, Guizhou province was sleeping at home when he felt something was trying to enter his ear. He woke up with a bad headache and attempted to use his hand to clear his ear. However, he felt something pressing into his ear even deeper. Ten minutes later, Zhong's ear began bleeding. He poured gas into his ear and a 5-centimeter centipede crawled out.

(Tencent)

Two Men Made 'Obedience Water'

Two men in Jinan, Shandong province were caught selling sachets of mixed psychedelic drugs they branded "obedience water" on the Internet. A third of a packet dissolved in water was reportedly enough to cause a temporary loss of memory and a loss of motor controls. Police said the packets also contained an illegal aphrodisiac. Both men were arrested by police in Jinan.

(Tencent)

Meditation Replaces School Naps

Shuben Primary School in Foshan, Guangdong province started a new trial program that replaces noon naps with meditation. Students are instructed to place a piece of paper on the ground and sit on it cross-legged. Headmaster Wu demonstrated the pose for students on the school's closed circuit TV. Wu said he had been practicing meditation for more than 20 years and believed it would be beneficial to students.

(Tencent)

Student Robbed Supermarket to Get Freedom

Pan Yong, a postgraduate student, robbed a supermarket hoping to escape his controlling parents in prison. After the robbery, Pan stood by and waited for the police to arrive. He asked if the crime was severe enough to get a prison sentence, and whether he should smile for his mug shot. Police said Pan came from a wealthy family and never lacked money.

(Tencent)

Man on Rampage Murders Ex-Girlfriend's Family

Xiaoli's parents and brother were murdered in their home in Ruzhou, Henan province in late June. The police have arrested her ex-boyfriend Liu on suspicion of murder.

Xiaoli's family was against their relationship and pressured her to break up with Liu. After the breakup, Liu closed himself off. He came to believe Xiaoli's family was directly responsible for the end of their relationship.

Liu reportedly ordered some tools online and used an old photograph of Xiaoli to track down her family. He traveled from Guangdong province to Henan with the intent to commit murder, police said. Liu is under criminal detention and the case is ongoing.

(Tencent)

As a high school student in western Massachusetts, Julie Upton-Wang took a class in Asian history. She became fascinated with Asian countries – especially China – and wanted to study the language so she could better understand the culture.

Then she came to live.

“It was to make it alive,” Upton-Wang says today, after 34 years of living and working in China.

She ended up studying Chinese in college, spent a year in Taiwan and began graduate work at the University of California at Berkeley’s Institute of East-Asian Studies. In 1981, she came to China as part of a US Department of Commerce management training program that taught capitalism to Chinese state managers.

When she first set foot on Chinese soil, Upton-Wang didn’t think she would spend so much of her life here. But like many expats who are led to China by curiosity, a business idea or a job opportunity, she eventually decided to make Beijing her home.

People come to the city thinking

really awesome all the time,” he says. “And now that I spoke the language everything was going to be a lot easier, and all the cool experiences I had the first time I lived in China would be even cooler.”

But he gradually started to feel less like an outsider, and once he got married, family entered into the equation. Now, both he and Liu Fang consider Beijing their home.

Technology and extended family visits to Beijing help Setzer preserve a sense of closeness to his US relatives. On top of that, the friends he’s made in China – “these wildly interesting people” who are entrepreneurs and adventurers – have become a second family, he says.

It’s a family whose influence can benefit his 4-year-old son Robby.

“The more he really understands how big the world is, the less afraid he’s going to be of people who are different from him and the more of an opportunity he’s going to have than I did when I was little,” Setzer said.

Julie and Andy Hargrave also had their teenage daughter Phoebe’s inter-

Making a Home in Beijing

BY SIMINA MISTREANU

they won’t stay long, but sometimes, before they even notice, they’ve put down roots.

About 240,000 foreigners were employed on the Chinese mainland in 2012, according to China’s Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.

It’s a number that has grown steadily over the past two decades. Around half are Americans, and 20 percent come from the UK. Shanghai and Beijing are the most popular expat destinations, though many start out in second or third-tier cities.

A Sense of Home

Ohio-native Carl Setzer took a job with a truck manufacturer in Shiyan, Hubei province in 2004. After more studying and work in the US, he returned to China in the spring of 2008 to lead the operations of an American information security company. That same year he married his longtime friend Liu Fang.

They started thinking about launching a business, and in 2010 they opened a craft brewery called Great Leap Brewing in a Beijing hutong. They’ve since expanded to two other locations, and their beers, made with ingredients such as Chinese teas and Sichuan peppercorn, are popular among foreigners and locals alike.

When he returned to China, Setzer, 33, didn’t have a specific plan.

“I thought it was just going to be

ests in mind when they decided to extend their teaching contracts in China for another two years. They teach business subjects at an international school in Beijing.

The family arrived in Xi’an, Shaanxi province, in 2011 with their then-12-year-old girl in tow. Hailing from Chichester, a small town on the south coast of England, the Hargraves wanted to come to China for the adventure and because they were growing dissatisfied with their jobs. They promised Phoebe they could return to England after two years. But when the time came, the girl wouldn’t hear about it.

“It was very funny because Phoebe had this ranking, and going back to the UK was her least favorite option,” Julie Hargrave recalls.

Their daughter is now almost fluent in Chinese, moves around the city independently and enjoys her International Baccalaureate curriculum and being a young global citizen.

Always a ‘Laowai’

Like any home, Beijing has also brought challenges to its foreign dwellers. Setzer is blunt about them.

“I’ve been as comfortable as you could be as an expat with an extremely generous and patient wife and an idea for a business,” he says.

“But also the reality that I’m never going to be Asian. So no matter what I



Carl Setzer with his wife, Liu Fang, and son, Robby. Photo by Aaron Berkovich/Great Leap Brewing

accomplish, people’s first impression of me is that I’m a *laowai*. It’s not that I’m a good businessman or a good father or a good person. It’s just the otherness of being foreign,” he says.

On bad days, being away from your native land is just another reason to be disconcerted, Setzer says. But he likes to remind himself of the value that comes from having chosen to challenge one’s self and live outside one’s comfort zone.

“Your home is what you have right now,” he says.

Maybe counter-intuitively, China has taught the Hargraves to finally relax, they say.

“In here because you don’t understand what’s going on a lot of the time, you have to just relax and let it go,” Julie Hargrave says. “If you’re too intense about anything, you might as well give up.”

China has also opened the couple to a lot of travel, to understanding different cultures and religions.

You can’t change China. That’s the premise of *To Change China: Western Advisers in China*, Jonathan Spence’s famous book. Julie Upton-Wang believes that, similarly, China hasn’t changed her.

But it’s taught her about how people with different backgrounds can work together to solve problems. Together with a group of friends, Upton-Wang has built a sustainable business in Mutianyu village, near the Great Wall.

Upton-Wang says her Chinese experience has come full circle since high school, when she wrote a Beatles’ quote in her yearbook, “And the world will be as one.”

“It sounds silly; it sounds really idealistic,” she says laughing. “That’s where it came from for me.” ■



Photo by kzwangluo.com

Trust in First Agricultural E-business Plummet

BY SHU PENGQIAN



Photo by news.ymt360.com

The last week of August was especially hard for Yimutian employees. On Aug. 28, the agricultural e-business site announced the overnight termination of half its staff.

News first appeared on Ebrun.com, which cited anonymous sources who identified themselves as former Yimutian employees. The mass layoffs were attributed to employees' alleged violations of company policy.

"During the day I worked hard to win a customer. That night, they sent me a message telling me not to come in the next day," said Li Wei (pseudonym), an Yimutian employee. "It was too sudden, and the reason the company fired me was groundless."

More than 1,500 employees were fired overnight, Li said. Yimutian had 3,000 employees at its peak.

Industry watchers took the mass layoffs as a sign that Yimutian is in trouble. Rumors that Sequoia Capital is withdrawing its investment in the company have been circulating for several weeks. Although Yimutian has officially denied the rumor, Sequoia Capital has been ambiguous about its interests in the company.

August was not the first time Yimutian experienced a reputation crisis.

In July, Yimutian was caught making false transaction reports. Among the more questionable trades were the sale of 999.99 tons of peaches to a man surnamed Liu and 1.07 million tons of onions to a client surnamed Li.

Even Xichang, a city in Sichuan province known for producing an absurd number of onions, can only produce 300,000 tons in a full year.

Yimutian announced its trading volume was only 500,000 yuan per month in 2014. This year, it declared it was processing 10 billion yuan per month.

Faced with doubts and criticism, Yimutian held a press conference to declare its strange numbers only reflected test data, and that the data shown on its website was very different from the company's private records.

But the 300 million yuan in sales per day were absolutely correct, it said.

Nevertheless, the damage to the company's public image was done, and its two reputation crises pushed it to the center of a debate about the viability of agricultural e-business.

Obstacles to Developing Business

When Yimutian was formed in 2011, investors hoped it could become a second

Taobao - China's e-commerce goliath.

Deng Jinhong, creator of Yimutian, described the company's organization as a decentralized network of top-talents with paychecks to match. The main job for its staff would be to hit the countryside and train farmers in how to do business with buyers from around the country. It would also help buyers to locate farmers with high-quality products.

The reality ended up more complicated. Yimutian never reached its promising idea because the dream was completely out of line with the habits of Chinese farmers.

Although mobile phones are everywhere in China, not all villages have the kinds of towers needed to make them work.

Even where technology could allow Chinese farmers to surf the Internet, most are too occupied with sowing, planting, fertilizing and harvesting their fields.

It needs huge investment, including time, money and equipment, to change the basic habits of Chinese farmers and to introduce them to e-business. Analysts said it would be a doomed battle without a huge amount of investment and incredible patience.

Moreover, the phrase "seeing is

believing" is engraved on rural trade. In China, where almost every image is digitally altered, no one can tell whether the goods they see online will arrive the same. Most buyers prefer to inspect produce on their own rather than rely on a picture.

In the rare cases where a suitable farmer and buyer manage to meet, the payment process can become another barrier. Buyers must pay Yimutian through the bank before it will transfer the money to the farmer, who can then get it out of the bank.

Rather than address these core challenges, Yimutian attempted to win users by subsidizing sales.

From December 2014 to June 2015, sellers and buyers were given an 0.001 percent rebate. From June 3 to 17, the subsidy increased to 0.002 percent of the sales volume.

Yimutian said it sold 9.98 billion yuan worth of produce in June.

However, the fact is that before doing business through Yimutian, many sellers and buyers completed their deals. The parties only finished the transaction through Yimutian to get the subsidy.

In other words, their sale was just a show.

Yimutian returned the subsidy rate to 0.001 percent per person on June 17. Last month, it canceled all subsidies for any users other than its VIP suppliers.

According to an email the company sent to Lü Ye (pseudonym), an employee, Yimutian is canceling its VIP subsidy and moving all sales to a branded members-only app.

It's hard to speculate whether Yimutian can get survive this crisis and adjust its business model. But Yimutian's experience is a lesson for other e-business operators: in the Chinese agricultural product e-business market, a pure information provider cannot survive. ■



Chasing Dreams: Rural Students in China's Universities

BY WANG YAN

"My life goal is to work at an important position in a company like Apple," said Xiaohua (pseudonym), a 19-year-old English major at a Beijing university.

The dream is grand, but for Xiaohua, success is the only route out the financial struggle that has haunted her for almost all her life.

Born to a poor family in Hainan, Xiaohua arrived in Beijing two years ago when she was admitted into the university.

"I was so excited when I got here. I saw so many names that used to only be in books. Peking University is just next door. And then there is Zhongguancun, where many entrepreneurs started their dreams," she said.

"I felt like I was living at the center of the country, a place where I was surrounded by great people, great ideas and great ways of thinking," Xiaohua said.

For such students, arriving in the big city for higher education is the first step to fulfilling their dream. But before they can get there, they must survive

the country's infamous National College Entrance Exam: the gaokao.

The gaokao is constantly criticized for being a make-or-break opportunity. And its stakes are especially high for students from poor families because a degree is essential to good employment in China.

Progress or Setbacks?

Some 9 million students attended this year's two-day gaokao in June, Xinhua reported. And more students from rural backgrounds appear to be succeeding. The number of rural students bound for top universities has increased by more than 10 percent for two consecutive years.

More than 80 percent of the test-takers in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region were admitted to university, and 40 million students living in poverty in Shaan'xi province benefited from favorable admission policies, Xinhua reported.

However optimistic the data seems to be, the gap in higher education between rural and urban students remains vast.

According to an article published in



CFP Photos

Nature by Wang Qiang, a conjoint professor at the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography of the Chinese Academy of Science in Urumqi, fewer than one in five new students at Tsinghua University were from rural areas in 2010.

The proportion of rural students at Peking University decreased from roughly 30 percent to 10 percent in the past decade.

Instead, students from the countryside are shunted into lower-quality colleges. For example, 82 percent of the students in medium-ranking vocational colleges were from rural areas in 2012, Wang said.

Xinhua reported that about 740 rural students were admitted to Peking University, Tsinghua University and Fudan University last year, which is three times more than in 2013. Among the students admitted to Peking University, those from rural China accounted for around 18.5 percent, the highest in recent years.

However, compared to numbers from several decades ago, the current enrollment is rather disappointing.

According to an article published

by *The Economist* last year, half of the incoming freshmen at Tsinghua University were from poorer, rural areas in the 1970s.

In 2010 that figure fell to 17 percent. Tan Wufeng, a communications teacher at Tsinghua, told *The Economist* she was shocked to find her freshman class lacked a single student from rural China.

There are many reasons behind this phenomenon. Schools in urban areas generally have more money than their rural peers. *The Economist* reported that in 2011, Beijing's annual expenditure per child for primary school education was around 20,000 yuan. In many other parts of China, that figure is probably closer to 3,000 yuan a year.

Also, corruption is commonly seen when seeking a good school for students. The best schools are likely to be occupied entirely by officials' children.

In addition, the gaokao system itself discriminates against people from the countryside.

Universities set quotas on the number of students they will admit from each province. To land one of the few spots available, students from the countryside must score as high on the gaokao as their urban peers in spite of their more basic education.

The commercial education market also plays an important role in creating a gap between rural students and urban students.

In big cities, wealthier students have better access to private tutors, as well as an opportunity to study abroad and undertake helpful extra-curricular activities. Rural counterparts who depend on their local public schools have fewer opportunities.

Chasing Dreams

Xiaohua said she did not feel too much pressure from her limited finances.

"Life in the university doesn't cost too much. Food in the dining halls only costs a few yuan. Even for the meat dishes it only costs 3 yuan. The dormitory is also relatively cheap, so I don't feel that bad. But I am sure if I graduate and have to live in Beijing on my own it will be a struggle," she said.

The government grants 1,000 to 3,000 yuan to support students who are struggling financially. Xiaohua also works at a part-time job to cover her daily expenses.

But like many others, the dilemma of looking for a job to earn money and looking for a job to earn experience confuses her.

As a girl determined to succeed, Xiaohua said she did not feel psychological pressure as most people had imagined. Big city life did not overwhelm her: on the contrary it excited her.

"Coming to Beijing has made me more confident. It's a positive force for me. Beijing suits me more than my hometown," Xiaohua said.

With the country's economic development and enriched information exchange, it's a positive sign to see students from less privileged backgrounds with the confidence to speak out.

But as previous reports have suggested, the opportunities given to rural and urban students are still unfairly different. At the macro-level, more work must be done by the government to narrow the gap and create a fair environment for students. ■



Britain's War Horse Steps onto Eastern Stage

BY YANG XIN

Chinese theatergoers can catch the award-winning British play *War Horse* on domestic stages this fall.

As part of the 2015 UK-China Year of Cultural Exchange, Britain's National Theatre Live, known as NT Live, is collaborating with the National Theater of China to bring more productions to China with the support of the British Council.

The remake and premiere of *War Horse* marks the first collaboration between the two theater giants. The Chinese production of *War Horse* debuted on Sept. 4.

The puppet-powered play was based on a best-selling 1982 novel by Michael Morpurgo. This Tony Award-winning musical adaptation has been hailed as "the most moving and spectacular play in London."

The play is about the quirky and

dramatic experiences of a young boy named Albert and his beloved farm horse. Instead of telling the story from Albert's perspective, the book is narrated by the stallion, Joey.

Using life-like and life-sized horse puppets, the theatrical adaption leads spectators into a world that is alternately idyllic and horrific. Following the clip-clop of Joey, audiences journey from the peaceful countryside of England to the brutal battlefields of France during World War I.

Once staged at the National Theatre in London, the play has been tremendously successful and adapted into German and Dutch. So far, it has been performed more than 3,000 times and watched by 5 million people worldwide.

The scheduled Chinese production will

mark the first time that the play has been staged in Asia, following a wider arts and culture co-production agreement between Britain and China.

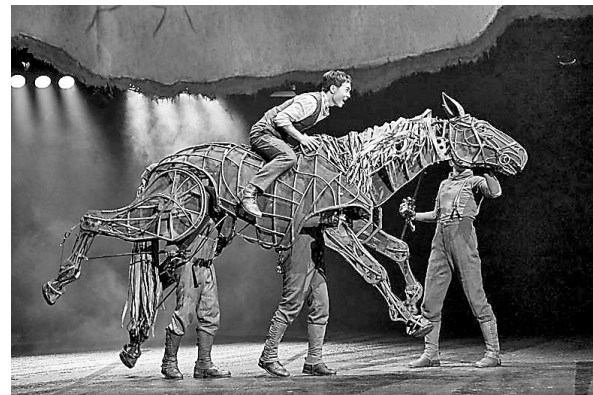
It has taken one and a half year for the West End show to be adapted into Chinese. Director Alex Simms said there were numerous difficulties that hindered the Chinese translation.

"We found out the problem here was general knowledge of Europe. You know, China wasn't familiar with Europe, the French language and the German language. But working with the Chinese directing team and the translator, we managed to find Chinese idioms to fill in where something was colloquially English or French or German."

Puppet director Liu Xiaoyi spoke

about the puppets used in the show." We use life-sized animal puppets, although we also have hand puppets. The horse puppet needs three people working together to control it, which is not easy. It's really difficult for three people to control one horse."

The Chinese version of *War Horse* will be staged in other Chinese cities including Shanghai and Guangzhou. ■



Photos by Ralf Brinkhoff and Birgit Mogenburg

Alliance Francaise Brings French Romance to Beijing

BY YANG XIN

In the Chinese mind, the words "Paris" and "France" are synonymous with romance. The French capital is one of China's most popular honeymoon destinations.

To bring a French vibe to the capital's residents and build on the success of the 2014 Romance Autumn Festival, the Alliance Francaise de Pekin is introducing a series of cultural events on its 2015 Romance Autumn Festival agenda.

Events include Baroque music performances and exhibitions of French literature, painting and art.

The Prisoner of Dreams is an exhibition that Alliance Francaise organized to question the comic form through the works of Marc-Antoine Mathieu. It explores the role of comic strips in modern times with 23 exhibits mainly coming from Mathieu's comic series *Julius Corentin Acquefacques*.

Mathieu is a self-discipline comic book writer who pushes the art to its limits, exploring its boundaries and the external boundaries of our universe.

Like those leading artists in the French

New Wave Movement, his comic strips feature a philosophical line. It's that essential French feature that makes this exhibition a representative of French culture.

Paris Alongside the Seine is another photography exhibition included in the Romance Autumn Festival.

Almost every city situated near water has some natural links with the static and constantly flowing object. Paris is no exception.

While it's common knowledge that the Notre Dame Cathedral is the epicenter of Paris, the real essence of the city is captured by the river Seine. On a metaphysical level, the river is a type of mirror in which the city finds its own reflection.

The Seine River not only captures modern Paris: it has mesmerized and seduced since pre-medieval times. Bifurcating the city of Paris into left and right banks, the river has served as a source of sustenance, commerce and breathtaking perspectives since the day the city began.

The exhibition is set to display old banks and beaches alongside the Seine River and the



living scenes of nearby Parisians. This year marks the 10th anniversary of Paris Plages, the French capital's beach festival. The Alliance Francaise expects to restore the intimate link between Parisians and the Seine River through this exhibition.

Other cultural events include a Parent-Child Symposium with Jeanne Ashbe, featuring the respected French children's writer and illustrator, the Stradivaria, Journey of Humor, a Baroque-style music concert that features musician Dominique Visse on Sept. 24, and Guo Gan and Adrien Frasse Sombet, a string duo concert featuring two exceptional performers from China and France on Sept. 26.

More information about the Romance Autumn Festival is available on Alliance Francaise's official website at beijing.afchine.org. ■

National Center for the Performing Arts

Sept. 4 – Oct. 31

277 Guang'anmen Wai Dajie, Xicheng

200-800 yuan



Photos by the Alliance Francaise de Pekin

Prisoner of Dreams

Sept. 7 – 30

Beijing Language and Culture University

Free

Paris alongside the Seine

Sept. 1 – 30

Alliance Francaise de Pekin

Free

China's First Lady Came to BYCI

Professionals from different fields and 200 children from around the country came to the Beijing Youth Camp International (BYCI) on Aug. 18 to take part in the "2015 Summer Camp for AIDS Orphans" event.

Chinese officials and celebrities were invited to join in the event, including China's first lady, Peng Liyuan; Cui Li, the deputy director general of the National Health and Family Planning Commission of the People's Republic of China (NHFPC); Pu Cunxin, the goodwill messenger at NHFPC AIDS Prevention; former basketball player Yao Ming; Chinese actress Jiang Wenli; and CCTV anchor Ju Ping.

About the Event

CCTV anchor Ju Ping and a child selected from the 200 children emceed the event.

Peng Liyuan, China's first lady, watched children's performances and encouraged them to have a positive attitude on life.

Shen Na, a soprano at the Central Opera House as well as a representative of the Red Ribbon Foundation, led the children into a vocal exercise. Under her guidance, children sang the well-known Chinese song *Let's Swing Our Oars*.

During the event, Chinese star Jiang Wenli went from being an actress to being a teacher, and she gave children an acting lesson. Inspired by Jiang, the children performed a wonderful play for the audience.

Also, Pu Cunxin gave a lecture about the United Nations called "United Nations Knowledge Forum." After the lecture, Pu taught children how to distin-

guish the flags of different countries.

Meanwhile, the former basketball player Yao Ming played an excellent basketball match with the children.

Except for the above programs, children also participated in activities such as first-aid training, a news broadcast simulation game and a painting competition.

In the end, children read aloud an essay written by Chinese writer Liang Qichao in the Qing dynasty.

Introduction of the Organization

The Summer Camp for AIDS Orphans has been held five times since 2010.

Every time, children from areas where AIDS prevention and control are considered a primary task are invited to tour other places, such as the city of Beijing, the city of Shanghai, the city of Shenzhen in Guangdong province, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the city of Beidaihe in Hebei province.

In the past three years, the organizers of the Summer Camp for AIDS Orphans have held winter camp activities, offering children from Yunnan province, Guangxi province, Sichuan province, Shanxi province and Anhui province a chance to enjoy the holidays. ■

(By Shu Pengqian)



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BEIJING TODAY

eDigest | 《今日北京》电子文摘



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